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Father and Daughter

While the Administration is seemingly wracked by indecision on policy toward South Viet Nam a curious sort of campaign is going on. Mme. Ngo Dinh Nhu is making appearances in behalf of the regime headed by her brother-in-law, President Diem, while her father, Tran Van Chuong, intends to follow up like a sort of one-man truth squad, denouncing everything Mme. Nhu represents.

The spectacle is fascinating enough without trying to forecast whether the father or the daughter will win the favor of the American people and their representatives in Washington. We have seen Mme. Nhu on television and can report that no aspiring starlet ever tried harder to impress a Hollywood producer. She is a very pretty woman.

It is unfortunate that her father, who resigned as Ambassador to Washington in protest against Mme. Nhu's utterances and the repressive policies of the family in Saigon, is not so photogenic. But Tran Van Chuong makes sense and we would like to think that Americans could play it both ways—look at Mme. Nhu and listen to her father.

Mr. Chuong quit last August because the Diem government was persisting in its attacks on Buddhists and other dissidents. He said he could not continue to represent a government "which ignores my advice and of which I disapprove." The question, he said, is not one of silencing the Buddhist monks but of remedying the general discontent which manifests itself through the voices of the monks as well as numerous professors and students at Hue University. . . . The question is not to forestall a coup d'etat but to win the war against the Viet Cong (Communist guerrillas)."

The matter of remedying the general discontent was subordinated, at least publicly, in the report to President Kennedy of Defense Secretary McNamara and Gen. Maxwell Taylor, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, after a survey of South Viet Nam. But the subsequent Administration statement did say that the United States has made clear its "continuing opposition to any repressive actions" by the regime.

United States efforts in this direction have borne no fruit, but it is now reported that commercial exports to South Viet Nam have been suspended while the Administration considers whether to reduce aid as a further form of pressure. Another lever may be provided by the results of the new United Nations inquiry into Buddhist charges of persecution.

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